

PEOPLE & THINGS

By ATTICUS

("The Englishness of English Art and Architecture") seems especially happy.

IN a week in which the Commonwealth Prime Ministers have been honoured and conspicuous visitors to London, one man has been discreetly but pertinently in attendance upon them: Sir Gilbert Lathwaite, who on February 17 becomes Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations.

"All things to all men" is supposed to be a compliment. "The same to all men" is, surely, a greater one—and one to pay to Gilbert Lathwaite. For young and old, men and women, masters and servants, the manner is the same: only the nicely-chosen matter differs. At first the diction may seem esoteric; but there is nothing esoteric about the chuckle with which the sentence comes to an end. The manner is at first pro-consular, Curzonian almost; but, there too, the chuckle gets the upper hand.

His long history of success as an administrator (as Private Secretary to the Viceroy of India, for instance, from 1936 to 1943, and later as Deputy Under-Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations, British Ambassador in Dublin, and High Commissioner in Pakistan) comes from his ability to listen to points of view, to marshal other people's facts as well as his own, and to estimate any given situation in a way that earns the respect of those under him, those over him, and those against him.

No Through Road

SINCE the Formosa crisis first dominated the headlines quite a number of journalists have made their way to the large house in South Audley Street in which the Chinese Communist Chargé d'Affaires has set up his offices.

The neighbourhood is sedate and quietly luxurious. Miss Constance Spely spreads her beguiling poses, Mr. Purdey oils and polishes his sporting guns, and the University Women amble in and out of their club.

Yet even the keenest Sinophill must feel a change of atmosphere when he attempts to call on the Chargé d'Affaires. The hall is barely furnished, the welcome courteous but cool.

"I'm sorry," says the smiling Chinese official at the reception desk, "but we have no Press Attaché. There is no one who can see you."

"But surely you wish to have your country's point of view understood?"

"Our Foreign Minister expressed our Government's view in his speech of December 24. You should read that if you wish for guidance."

"But the situation has changed since December 24."

"I am very sorry. I can only refer you to his speech."

Though the Chinese may not be anxious to see representatives of the reactionary Press, it is clear that they are interested in what that Press is saying. As I waited forlornly in the hall, a small Chinese official tottered past with a huge waste-paper basket crammed tight with the carcasses

of newspapers from which extensive cuttings had been taken.

A Great Interpreter

IN inviting Dr. Nikolaus Pevsner to deliver this year's Reith Lectures, the Governors of the B.B.C. have paid a deserved compliment to a man who is, in his own field, one of the greatest of popular educators.

It was in the worst years of the war that Dr. Pevsner (then a lecturer at Birkbeck College, London University) first canvassed the idea of a series of popular handbooks, at once cheap and compendious, in which every build-



Columbia Market, Bethnal Green, 1866-68: see "Diversities."

ing of architectural interest in the whole of England would be scrutinised and discussed.

In a voice as clear as Malvern water he expounded the project to publisher after publisher. All detected, in the slight tremble of his super-sensitive frame, the excitement of the fanatic. "Too keen by half!" they said, and politely turned away.

Eventually Mr. (now Sir) Allen Lane took on the mammoth project which, though Continental in style and origin (like its originator), is now consummately adapted to English needs and fancies; and there resulted from this the Penguin series of guides to "The Buildings of England."

Diversities

DR. PEVSNER is not conservative in his choice of subjects. Anything from a Roman mosaic or an undated barrow to the Royal Festival Hall comes within his scope. Nothing that has, or had, four walls is rejected out of hand. Comment is never perfunctory; and even in his choice of illustration (as may be judged from the above picture from the volume on "London") no building is too bizarre or outmoded to make an illuminating point.

In the circumstances his choice of subject for the Reith Lectures

Brave Noises

LIKE most of those who live or work within earshot of Wellington Barracks, I owe a debt of gratitude to the Guards' Bands for the uproarious high spirits which they so often bring to the long dullness of a winter forenoon.

This gratitude prompted me to seek out Major F. J. Harris, M.B.E., Director of Music to the Grenadier Guards, in his underground fastness in Wellington Barracks. The walls were lined with folio volumes of orchestral parts (more than 4,000, and many of them dating from 150 years ago); a French horn was bubbling upstairs, and Major Harris himself was just filing away some inspiring compositions which he had received as a present from a representative of the Yugoslav Opera Company.

Sounds That Give Delight

HE takes a proper pride in a repertoire which ranges from the march which Handel wrote especially for the regiment to a selection from "Salad Days," and in the enthusiasm which prompts his young players to rehearse the great undemanded classics for their own enjoyment. "But of course things aren't quite what they were. A hundred years ago, when there were only two or three symphony orchestras in England, our bands really stood for music. Why, we could get 20,000 people to come and hear us. Today we'd be lucky to get 1,200."

There is a change, too, in the attitude of concert promoters, who tend to economise by hiring a bare third of the band's full complement of sixty-six players. But the public as a whole remains devoted to the tumult of a first-class military band in the open air; and as I inspected Major Harris's collection of favourite marches (themselves an epitome of European history, with "Gallant Serbia," "The Uhlan's Call," and "The Bersagliere" on the bottom shelf) I thought that few men could be more sure of their contribution to innocent happiness.

Pusztá Party

HUNGARY has a great deal to offer the English visitor, and I was delighted to hear from my colleague Ritchie McEwen, who is now in Budapest, that the Hungarian Government is proposing this summer to admit some ten or twelve thousand tourists from the West.

In Budapest itself, six very passable hotels will be open to tourists; and on the Arcadian shores of Lake Balaton access will be given to two resorts, Pihány and Balatonszederkény, which have hitherto been out of bounds even to the diplomatic corps. Sailing, lawn tennis, swimming in warm, shallow water—these are the pleasures of Lake Balaton. It also yields in abundance a fish, the *jogóscsi*, which initially tastes like very clean socks but can be prepared in any number of delectable ways.

Two aspects of Hungarian travel will, however, need to be revised before English visitors can be seriously tempted—the rate of exchange, which now makes ten shillings an everyday tip to a railway porter, and the visa-formalities, which are at present as tortuous as any in the world.